
BUDGET UNIT BRIEF – FY 2025

Fiscal Services Division

July 1, 2024



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Des Moines, Iowa 50319

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Early Warning System for Literacy

Overview

The Early Warning System for Literacy provides reading assessments for students prekindergarten through grade six to detect students persistently at risk in reading. Local school districts use universal screening and progress monitoring assessments and store student performance data on a statewide database. The Department of Education provides the assessments at no cost to schools, though beginning in FY 2016, the appropriation for the program has not been sufficient to fund the entire program.

The Early Warning System consists of two parts:

- Universal screening identifies students at risk for reading difficulties. These assessments are administered to all students three times a year, in the fall, winter, and spring. Universal screening measures are brief assessments that focus on a variety of targeted skills.
- Progress monitoring assessments are administered to students receiving additional instruction or intervention to determine if students are improving in reading.

Before FY 2018, the Early Warning System also included the Iowa Tools for Innovation and Educational Results (TIER) system. The use of that data system was discontinued during FY 2017.

State-Purchased Assessments

The Department has purchased the following assessments for school districts:

- Formative Assessment System for Teachers (FAST): A suite of online assessments for kindergarten through grade six that provides universal screening and progress monitoring, which includes a data system for teachers to record information.
- Individual Growth and Development Indicators (IGDIs): A set of online assessments for prekindergarten that provides universal screening.

School districts are not required to administer FAST and IGDIs. They may purchase different assessments as long as the assessments are deemed reliable and valid. The Department lists acceptable options on its website. Currently, more than 90.0% of public schools utilize FAST and IGDIs.

Training

The Iowa Reading Research Center (IRRC) partners with Iowa's colleges and universities to align statewide literacy initiatives with preservice teacher preparation. All 29 of Iowa's colleges and universities with elementary teacher preparation programs have participated in training to administer and use the FAST and IGDIs assessments.

More Information

Iowa's Early Warning System for Literacy: educateiowa.gov/pk-12/instruction/literacy/early-literacy-initiative

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Funding

The Department receives \$1.9 million in State appropriations for the Early Warning System for Literacy. The Department may also secure additional funds from other sources, including billing school districts for a portion of the cost to provide a funding amount the Department considers necessary to meet the requirements stated in Iowa Code section [279.68](#).

Related Statutes and Administrative Rules

Iowa Code section [279.68](#)

Iowa Administrative Code [281—62](#)

Budget Unit Number

2820W170001

Doc ID 1443641